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LETTER DATED 18 FEBRUARY 1998 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ZIMBABWE TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

In my capacity as the representative of the current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), I have the honour to forward, on behalf of His Excellency Salim Ahmed Salim, Secretary General of the Organization of African Unity, the text of a statement issued by the Central Organ of the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution at its forty-fourth ordinary session, held at Addis Ababa on 13 February 1998, concerning the situation in Sierra Leone.

I would be grateful if the text of the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Machivenyika Tobias MAPURANGA
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Zimbabwe
to the United Nations
Representative of the current Chairman
of the OAU

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Annex

[Original: English and French]

Statement of the Central Organ on Sierra Leone
issued at Addis Ababa on 13 February 1998

1. The Central Organ of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, meeting at its forty-fourth ordinary session at the ambassadorial level in Addis Ababa, on Friday, 13 February 1998, was briefed on the current situation in Sierra Leone. The Central Organ expressed grave concern at the intransigence of the illegal military junta in Sierra Leone with regard to the implementation of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) peace plan, signed at Conakry, on 23 October 1997.

2. The consequent delay in the implementation of the ECOWAS peace plan has led to the exacerbation of the grave humanitarian situation in Sierra Leone, which was brought about by the coup of 25 May 1997 that led to total anarchy and the destruction of administrative, social and economic institutions in Sierra Leone.

3. The Central Organ reaffirmed the support of OAU for ECOWAS and the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) in their efforts to bring an end to the crisis in Sierra Leone through the restoration of constitutional order and the reinstatement of the legitimate Government of President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah at the earliest possible date.

4. The Central Organ expressed concern over the loss of human lives and the destruction of administrative, social and economic infrastructure in Sierra Leone. It appealed to the international community to provide urgent assistance for the reconstruction of Sierra Leone. It also expressed concern over the flagrant violations of the sanctions regime imposed on the junta, especially the violation of the United Nations arms embargo and travel restrictions on members of the illegal regime and their families.

5. The Central Organ called upon all States members of OAU and the international community at large to strictly comply with Security Council resolution 1132 (1997) of 8 October 1997, imposing an arms and fuel embargo and a sanctions regime on the junta and their immediate families.

6. The Central Organ deplored the fact that the continuing intransigence of the junta has made it difficult for humanitarian agencies to bring in much needed humanitarian assistance to the suffering people of Sierra Leone. This critical situation is being exacerbated by the massive displacement of people and the huge influx of refugees into neighbouring countries.

7. The Central Organ recalled that the provision of humanitarian assistance is one of the objectives of the ECOWAS peace plan for Sierra Leone and launched an appeal to the international community to provide, as a matter of urgency, necessary humanitarian assistance to the people of Sierra Leone. It also urged the return of all relevant United Nations agencies to Sierra Leone in order to extend all possible cooperation to ECOWAS in the delivery of much-needed and necessary humanitarian assistance to the people of Sierra Leone.